



***Office of the United States Attorney  
District of Arizona***

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 17, 2005

For Information Contact Public Affairs

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# **TUCSON MAN CONVICTED OF TRANSPORTING ILLEGAL ALIENS FOR PROFIT**

PHOENIX - The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona announced that on February 17, 2005, Rene Gallegos-Contreras, 44, a legal permanent resident of Tucson, Arizona, was found guilty of two counts of Transportation of Illegal Aliens for commercial advantage and/or private financial gain by a federal jury in Tucson, Arizona.

The evidence at trial showed that on June 22, 2004, a United States Border Patrol Agent noticed the defendant driving a green Dodge van westbound on State Route 86 near milepost 146. The agent noted that the rear of the van was riding higher than the front due to an altered suspension. Approximately one hour later, the agent saw the same van headed in the opposite direction on State Route 86 riding level, indicating that a significant amount of weight had been added in the rear of the van. The defendant failed to yield when the border patrol agent attempted to stop the van to investigate. A Pima County Sheriff's Deputy eventually joined the pursuit and assisted with the traffic stop by blocking the road, forcing the defendant to come to a stop. Inside the van were five illegal aliens, including Manuel Lopez-Lopez, of San Cristobal, Chiapas, Mexico, and Santos Dominguez-Amaya of Ejutla de Crespo, Oaxaca, Mexico. Each stated that they were being charged money to be smuggled into the United States so that they could find work.

The defendant is being held pending sentencing in this matter.

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Rene Gallegos-Contreras had been charged with violating Title 8 of the United States Code, Sections 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii) and 1324(a)(1)(B)(i). The case was tried before United States District Court Judge Frank R. Zapata on February 15-17, 2005.

A conviction for Transportation of Illegal Aliens for commercial advantage and/or private financial gain carries a maximum penalty of 10 years, a \$ 250,000 fine or both.

The investigation leading to the guilty verdict was conducted by the United States Border Patrol and the Pima County Sheriff's Department.

Sentencing is set before Judge Zapata on May 2, 2005.

The prosecution was handled by Jeffrey H. Jacobson and Richard J. Suzuki, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, District of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona.

CASE NUMBER: CR-04-1513

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